

Jamaican company gets licence to cultivate ganja

Herbal Health Care Limited, a company formed by a group of Jamaicans, on Thursday became only the third local entity given permission to legally cultivate ganja, according to Phillip Paulwell, Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining.

"They were granted a permit on Thursday to cultivate marijuana/ganja for the purpose of research. They do have long-term objectives in terms of commercialisation, but they certainly would be awaiting the Cannabis Licensing Authority's regulations to pursue that aspect. What I do know is that they are very keen on doing research on the essential oils and to do value-added products for the export market," Paulwell disclosed. Herbal Health Care Limited, for which Hawthorne Watson, former head of the Scientific Research Council is chief operating officer, joins the University of the West Indies and the University of Technology in being granted a licence by the Government to grow and use ganja for research. The licence also gives both universities the permission to subcontract local farmers, however, Minister Paulwell did not provide details of the latest licence. **UNIVERSITIES LEADING THE CHARGE** The universities have been mandated to lead the charge in research and development, to lay the groundwork for Jamaica's entry into the global cannabis industry, which has been estimated at US\$240 million. Along with the scientific research, solid international business and financial models are projected to be developed for a range of niche industries within the global context. However, before Jamaica can begin to enjoy any of the anticipated gains from the ganja industry, the regulatory agency, the Cannabis Licensing Authority, chaired by food technologist Dr André Gordon, still has much work to do before earnings from the legal ganja industry take off in any real way. It will have to develop procedures and criteria for applying for and retention of licences, permits and other authorisations for cultivation, processing, distribution, sale, and other handling of ganja, but its work is not likely to be completed before next year. "They are now looking at the regulations that will have to precede the actual granting of licences and we anticipate that some time during the course of this year we'll get those drafts," Paulwell said. Source: Jamaica Gleaner